

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
Proudly Representing Pennsylvania's 15th District



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Congressman Dent votes for risk-assessed homeland
security funding
Measure builds on success of last Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15), a member of the House Homeland Security Committee, today voted in favor of H.R. 1 — Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007. The Congressman noted the bill that contains flaws but overall is in keeping with his continued commitment to securing our nation against terrorist attacks and remaining prepared for emergency.

Congressman Dent issued the following statement:

“In the time I have served in Congress and particularly on the Homeland Security Committee, we have made considerable progress toward securing our nation, and I support efforts to build upon those accomplishments. Today’s bill offered little that was new, and I have some concerns about certain provisions, but in the end I considered the good to outweigh the bad.

“During my first term, Congress and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) acted on 39 of the 41 recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. We met one of those objectives in the Homeland Security Committee by reporting out H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act of 2005. This bill, for the first time, mandated that homeland security funding be allocated to the states on the basis of risk, a key 9/11 Commission recommendation. We passed that bill by a vote of

409-10 during the last session, but it did not make it through the Senate. Risk-based allocation of resources in the fight against terror is vital, and thus including this provision within HR 1 is important for homeland security and a key reason I ultimately voted for the bill.

“That said, I do have a couple of concerns about this legislation:

“First, there are the container security provisions of this bill. HR 1 calls for scanning every single cargo container at foreign seaports. While that is a noble goal, the technology simply does not exist at this point to carry out this objective without bringing global trade to a standstill. The 9/11 Commission asked that the government ‘evaluate the transportation assets that need to be protected, set risk-based priorities for defending them, select the most practical and cost-effective ways of doing so, and then develop a plan, budget, and funding to implement the effort.’

“The SAFE Port Act, which we passed last year, did this; we created a pilot program which is ultimately designed to provide 100 percent scanning in a manner which is both safe and reliable. Until that pilot program is completed, however, we need to follow the 9/11 Commission model and make sure that our scanning policy focuses on risks and threats and is not just a bunch of empty rhetoric.

“Likewise, as a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I believe that the House missed a golden opportunity. The 9/11 Commission stated that, ‘Congress should create a single, principal point of oversight and review for homeland security.’ Our Committee still shares jurisdiction over the DHS with ten other House committees, hampering the ability of the House to show consistent leadership on homeland security legislation and oversight. The House leadership could easily have changed this situation by amending House rules and creating a single committee of jurisdiction, but they chose not to do so.

“Despite the bill’s shortcomings, I believe it is important to keep the momentum alive for continuous improvement of homeland security and I have voted accordingly.”

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